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Drivers- and Limits

What are the impacts of giving up the driver license?

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Objectives: Driving cessation is a gradual process, where driver's self-regulation plays an important role. Age-based license renewal procedures may interfere with this process and trigger premature driving cessation. The present study compares drivers aged 69 years at the baseline who either renewed their driver's license ("renewers") or did not ("non-renewers") over a two-year period.

Methods: Data were collected by interviewing a sample of older Danish people in 2009 ($n = 1,792$) and in 2012 ($n = 863$). The standardized interviews covered respondents' background information, health and well-being, and modal choices and transportation patterns.

Results: Non-renewers had poorer health already at baseline. However, they did become more dependent on others in their out-of-home activities after giving up their license. In travel frequency, neither the differences between renewers and non-renewers nor the changes over time within the groups were pronounced. Non-renewers reported more unmet mobility needs both in 2009 and 2012, especially in relation to leisure activities. The groups differed significantly in their use of transport modes. The renewers drove more often as the main transport mode, while non-renewers traveled in the car as passengers, used public transport, walked or cycled.

Discussion: The present study indicates that younger seniors' mobility is probably not affected by the renewal policies. However, given the positive economic and safety consequences of independent mobility in old age, society should try to prevent unwarranted mobility loss. Licensing policies signaling that in old age continuing to drive is an exception rather than the rule may work against this goal.